



CARLISLE FARMHOUSE
History1703
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Research Highlights

GOALS

- Research the history of the old farmhouse on the U.S. Army post of Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

PROGRESS

- Discovered through land and tax records that the house was built by a civilian family between 1853-1856 who then sold it to the Richard Parker family in 1860.
- Discovered a magazine article describing an account of Confederate soldiers staying the night at the farmhouse before being called to the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863.
- Discovered a letter written by Richard Pratt, head of the neighboring Carlisle Indian Industrial School, describing the advantages of buying the Parker farm with its “commodious and well-built” farmhouse for the agricultural education of the Indian students.
- Gathered newspaper accounts of the Indian students working on, learning in, and visiting the farmhouse for weekend recreation.
- Used local histories and census reports to discover that after the Indian School era, the farmhouse was used by African-American soldiers as they worked on the surrounding farmland.
- Learned that as the farmland was taken over by Army buildings, the house became officer’s housing and has remained so to the present day.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Trace the descendants of the African-American soldiers named in the 1930 U.S. Census who were associated with the farmhouse in order to learn their stories.
2. Learn more about the many Army officers and families who have lived in the house to gather their stories.
3. Research the lives of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School students through their descendants to find more accounts of their association with the farmhouse.

Research Report

On a forgotten corner of the grounds of the U.S. Army War College, in south central Pennsylvania, an old whitewashed brick farmhouse peeks through towering spruces. Although surrounded by the bustle of a modern Army post, it sits peacefully secluded behind mature trees and lawn, overlooking a large spring. Vacant now as it awaits its coming renovation, this Farmhouse has a rich and significant past.

Early History

The Farmhouse predates most of the buildings at Carlisle Barracks, and was originally a civilian home, outside of garrison boundaries. The original front portion of the house was built between 1853-1856, most likely by Daniel B. Keiffer.¹ Its 109-acre farm encompassed all the land now occupied by the northeast quarter of Carlisle Barracks, including the area of the Commissary, the PX, the Chapel, Young Hall, Indian Field, the Strategic Studies Institute, and the Heritage Heights housing development.²

The Farmhouse was built in high style, according to the fashions of the time. The center gable with its decorative bargeboard and circular window, as well as the peaked attic windows, are fine examples of the Gothic Revival style, while the bracketed cornice adds an

² "Cumberland County, Pennsylvania Tax Rate Books," microfilm at Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania., shows property owner in 1853 as Ulrich Strickler, with a 2-story stone house. The year 1856 shows property owner as Daniel B. Keiffer, with a brick house. Also see, "Deed of Sale," from Ulrich Strickler to Daniel B. Keiffer, 2 April 1855, "Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, Deed Book 2F," 342, at County Recorder's Office, Carlisle, PA.

³ Christina Schmidlapp, *A Cultural Resource Overview and Management Plan for the United States Army, Carlisle Barracks* (Cumberland County, Pennsylvania: Archaeological & Historical Consultants, Inc., 1988), section 7 p10.

Italianate touch.³ Nine-foot ceilings and tall 6/6 windows throughout give it a spacious feel. Formal living and dining rooms, four large bedrooms, a generous basement, and an attic provide plenty of living and storage space. But the crowning feature of this home is the central entry passage, open to the attic, and the original staircase with its mahogany railing spiraling all the way up to the third story.⁴

On 31 March 1860, Daniel Keiffer sold the farm to Richard Parker, a descendant of “one of the first families of Pennsylvania.”⁵ Richard Parker also owned a house in Carlisle Borough on High Street directly behind the First Presbyterian Church, of which he was a prominent member like his fathers before him.⁶ With his brother-in-law, William M. Henderson, he owned the Henderson & Parker Milling & Distilling Company from 1837-1848. They operated the old stone mill, which still stands on the Harrisburg Pike near the Wilson House, both now part of Carlisle Barracks property.⁷ William Henderson’s mother’s first husband was the same Major James A. Wilson who lived in the Wilson House.⁸

Richard Parker had a wife, Hadassah Graham Parker, and three young children: Andrew Henderson Parker; Mary Parker (McKeehan); and Richard McCue Parker.⁹ By 1862, he had

⁴ See Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

⁵ James S. Giffen, "The Farm Buildings," in *The Carlisle Arrow and Red Man*, February 8, 1918, 18-19, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

⁶ “Deed of Sale” from assignees of Daniel B. Keiffer to Richard Parker, 31 Mar 1860, Cumberland County, PA, Deed Book 2L, page 10, in County Recorder’s Office, Carlisle, PA. Also see note 23.

⁷ Map of Carlisle, Pennsylvania on wall of Hamilton Library, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1858.

⁸ Richard L. Tritt, *Here Lyes the Body: the Story of Meeting House Springs* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: First Presbyterian Church, 2009), 85, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

⁹ Jessica Sheets, “Wilson House”, December 16, 2010, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2010.

¹⁰ Richard L. Tritt, *Here Lyes the Body*, 2009, 82, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

built a frame tenant house and stables on the property, in addition to the Farmhouse and stone bank barn he had bought from Keiffer.¹⁰ Many years later, Mary P. McKeehan visited the Farmhouse and reminisced about her childhood there. She recalled that during the Civil War, when Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell's troops invaded Carlisle on 27 June 1863, a party of Confederate soldiers came to the Farmhouse and were fed and sheltered for the night by her mother.¹¹ The next morning, they were called to Gettysburg.

Richard Parker died on 4 March 1864, and is buried at the Meeting House Springs Cemetery in Carlisle.¹² His widow and children moved back into their town house and rented out the farm, sixteen acres of which was used by the Cavalry School at Carlisle Barracks as a drill ground, until 1 April 1871.¹³ An 1872 map labels the property as "A. Parker, Big Spring" showing that son Andrew had inherited the farm.¹⁴ By 1880, he and his wife, Mary Bishop Hammond Parker, and their infant son, David Hammond Parker, were living in the home with two servants.¹⁵ Between 1880 and 1883, the gross value of the property jumped from \$6,240 to \$10,300, suggesting that it was during this time that the rear wing was added on to the house.¹⁶

11 "Cumberland County, Pennsylvania Tax Rate Books," Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA.

12 James S. Giffen, James S. "The Farm Buildings," in *The Carlisle Arrow and Red Man*, February 8, 1918, 18-19, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

13 Richard L. Tritt, *Here Lyes the Body*, 2009, 82, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

14 Thomas G. Tousey, *Military History of Carlisle and Carlisle Barracks* (Richmond, VA : The Dietz Press, 1939), 264.

15 F.W. Beers, *Atlas of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania* (New York: F.W. Beers & Co., 1872), 14, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

16 1880 United States Census, North Middleton, Cumberland, Pennsylvania, E.D. 73, pg. 189D, dwelling 180, family 189, A.H. Parker: <http://ancestry.com>, accessed March 2013.

17 "Cumberland County, Pennsylvania Tax Rate Books," Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA. 1877, 1880, 1883. According to a Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form (see note 3), the rear ell is not original to the house. However, it exists in an 1895 photo. According to the magazine article (note 10), the Indian School only "slightly remodeled" the home to meet the school's needs.

The Indian School Era

In 1879, the War Department transferred the neighboring deserted Army garrison to the Department of the Interior, and Lt. Richard H. Pratt established the Carlisle Indian Industrial School at Carlisle Barracks. His intent was to educate Native American children to be able to function in white society. Pratt wrote:

One of the most important branches of our industrial training at Carlisle is the agricultural. More than half of our boys will eventually find in agriculture their life work. It is healthful, profitable, and the most independent of all industries.¹⁷

As soon as the school was organized, Pratt set out to acquire farmland for training his students. For the year 1880, he rented ten acres of land adjoining the Barracks property. From 1881 to 1883, he rented the entire 109 acres of the Parker farm, until 1884 when he purchased a 157-acre farm three miles away in Middlesex, from Benjamin W. Hocker.¹⁸

By 1886, Pratt found the Hocker farm to be inadequate for the needs of his growing school, and too far away to be truly effective in accomplishing his goals. He applied to Congress for funds to purchase the Parker farm:

I am now able to buy the Parker farm, which bounds our property on the east, and is best adapted for our uses. It can be obtained for \$18,000. It naturally drops in as a part of Government property and furnishes an outlet to the public road on two sides, an advantage never before possessed by the Government. It has one of the best and largest springs in the county, and running water along the whole west side. The buildings are a farm house of brick, commodious and well-built, a good

18 Richard H. Pratt, "Our Farm," *The Morning Star/ Eadle Keatah Toh*, May 1884: 1, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

19 Richard H. Pratt, "Our Farm," *The Morning Star/ Eadle Keatah Toh*, May 1884: 1, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

stone barn, and a frame tenant house. The property contains 109.57 acres, and is worth the money asked.¹⁹

The money was granted, and on 7 April 1887, the Parker family sold their farm to the United States for \$18,000 to be used by the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.²⁰ The school continued to use the Hocker farm as well, referring to it as the “lower farm” and the Parker farm as the “upper farm” or “near farm.”



The Carlisle Indian School Farmhouse, circa 1895. Courtesy of the Cumberland County Historical Society.

²⁰ Letter from the Acting Secretary of the Treasury, Transmitting Letter of Secretary of the Interior Relative to the Improvement of the Indian Industrial School at Carlisle, PA., 29 Jun 1886. Box 9, Folder 13, Carlisle Barracks Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA.

²¹ “Deed of Sale” from Hardarsah Parker, widow, Richard M. Parker and Mary P. McKeehan, 7 April 1887. Cumberland County, PA, Deed Book 4C, page 152. County Recorder’s Office, Carlisle, PA. (Andrew Parker and his wife Mary had conveyed all their interest in the property to his mother on 16 Sep 1884, Deed Book 3W, page 374.)

By 1892, the school, with the labor of the Indian students, had updated the farmhouse, torn down the old stone barn, and built a spacious new yellow barn, which included a modern dairy and piggery.²¹ In 1918 the school farmer James S. Giffen wrote an article about the farm buildings:

One of the most attractive features of the farm to the pupils is the old-fashioned farm house, which was built some time before the Civil War and was occupied by one of the first families of Pennsylvania...

To the rear of the house at the foot of a gentle slope is a bubbling spring, which rises in the old-fashioned stone spring house and forms a small lake, which does not freeze over in the coldest weather and is stocked with rainbow trout.

The house was planned for commodious hospitality and comfort. The rooms are large and of colonial style, having very high ceilings and a fireplace in nearly every room. A large colonial doorway opens from a wide porch into a hallway through the middle of the house, and from this hallway a winding stair with a mahogany railing extends to the attic. The house after being purchased by the school was slightly remodeled to meet the needs of its present use. It has been electrically lighted, has a steam heating plant, and running water. One room has been equipped as a school room and each day agricultural classes are held for the boys who work on the farm and dairy, covering the subjects of farming and stock raising, horticulture, farm machinery, types and breeds of farm animals, and dairying.

Overlooking the lake formed by the spring is a neat cottage for the dairyman...

The pride and joy of every Pennsylvania farmer is his barn, and very few in Cumberland County surpass in size the one at the first farm. The original barn had been made over a number of years ago, and is now of the prevailing style typical of this part of the country...

The boys who work on the dairy stay all night at the farm house and get their supper and breakfast, while the boys who work on the farm get their dinners only.²²

The school's head farmer and his family lived in the farmhouse and supervised the work of the students, as well as provided meals and beds for those who spent the night. In April

²² Based on several entries in *The Indian Helper*: 17 Apr 1891; 8 May 1891; 19 June 1891; 17 July 1891, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

²³ James S. Giffen, "The Farm Buildings," in *The Carlisle Arrow and Red Man*, 8 Feb. 1918, 18-19, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

1914 the school newspaper reported that students Ed. Bresette and Francis Obern were assigned to the first farm.²³ Besides the older boys who labored on the farm, many students loved to walk out to the farm as a fieldtrip or a Sunday afternoon excursion. One young boy wrote:

First we went and took a ride in the boat. It is big enough for us to take three at a time. Then we went down in the cellar and saw how they hatch eggs without a hen. They kept them in a box where it is warm. It is a dark place and they carry a lamp in the cellar, and we came out again to where they kept the little ones when they are hatched out.²⁴

As Giffen's article pointed out, the school's head dairyman lived in a cottage overlooking the lake formed by the spring. It is likely that this cottage was the "frame tenant house" which was part of the property the Indian School bought from the Parkers. It is unknown exactly where this house stood, or when (after 1918) it was demolished. However, there does appear to be the roof of a small house down to the left of the Farmhouse in the earliest photos. This would fit with having an "outlook from the west balcony" over the spring pond (see paragraph below).

In 1891, a former Indian School student Richard Davis (Cheyenne) returned to the school to serve as its head dairyman. His wife Nannie Aspinall (Pawnee) had also attended the school, and the two had been married in the school chapel in 1888.²⁵ They now had two daughters Richenda and Mary.²⁶ The dairyman's cottage was spruced up in preparation for their arrival. The school newspaper reported on 9 October 1891: "The balustrades on the front porch of Richard Davis' house at the near farm are the same that were built around

²⁴ *The Carlisle Arrow*, 17 Apr 1914, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

²⁵ *The Indian Helper* 15 May 1891, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

²⁶ *The Indian Helper*, 23 March 1888, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

²⁷ Barbara Landis, "Richard Davis & Paul Good Bear": <http://home.epix.net/~landis/davis.html>, accessed August 2015.

the Captain's house in 1863"²⁷; and on 23 October 1891: "Richard Davis' house at the near farm is receiving its last touch of paint and will soon be ready for occupancy. Richard and Nannie will have a nice little home there. The outlook from the west balcony is beautiful."²⁸ A third daughter, Esther, was born on 2 June 1892 at their home on the school farm.²⁹ In November of that year, there was a near-disaster in the little home:

A small fire scare at Richard Davis' house at the near farm on Sunday morning last, created considerable excitement about inspection time. It was Richard's presence of mind that saved the house. The fire started near a lamp, but just how no one knows, for there were no lamps burning at the time. One of the little ones may have been playing with a match near the lamps.³⁰

A new telephone was installed in the Farmhouse in December 1896 connecting it to the school's administration building.³¹

On 12 January 1901, the Indian School bought another farm of 175 acres from Christopher C. Kutz, which bordered the Parker farm on the north, extending out to the Harrisburg Pike and beyond.³² The Kutz farm featured another farmhouse (no longer standing), a fine orchard, a large barn, and good stables.³³ The Hocker farm was no longer needed, and was sold a few months later.³⁴ The Parker farm was now referred to as the "first farm" and the

28 *The Indian Helper*, 9 Oct, 1891, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

29 *The Indian Helper*, 23 Oct, 1892, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

30 *The Indian Helper*, 17 June, 1892, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

31 *The Indian Helper*, 4 Nov., 1892. Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania .

32 *The Indian Helper*, 11 Dec, 1896, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

33 Thomas G. Tousey, *Military History of Carlisle and Carlisle Barracks* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1939), 299.

34 James S. Giffen, "The Farm Buildings," in *The Carlisle Arrow and Red Man*, 8 February, 1918, 18-19, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

35 Richard H. Pratt, "The Farms," in *The Red Man and Helper*, 18 September, 1901, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Kutz farm as the “second farm”.³⁵ Together, the two farms provided enough food to the school to make it virtually self-sustainable.³⁶

Post-Indian School Era

On 1 September 1918, with World War I drawing to a close, the War Department reclaimed Carlisle Barracks for use as a rehabilitation hospital for wounded soldiers returning from Europe. The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was closed, and General Hospital Number 31 was immediately opened in its place. The school farms, along with the farmers, were retained to serve the hospital by providing both food and rehabilitation for the soldiers:

The fresh milk and eggs from the farm, as well as fresh meat, did much to restore the convalescents to health. Many of the patients were assigned to duty on the farm and learned practical lessons in agriculture from the ex-instructors of the Indian School.³⁷

By 1920, the number of patients had dwindled so the hospital was closed and replaced by the Medical Field Service School. Again, the farms were maintained at their full capacity. The two farms attached to the reservation grew great fields of wheat, hay and corn, requiring the full time of a detachment of colored soldiers. Proceeds from the sale of these products enriched the mess fund of the troops. The large “yellow barn” located near the Spring housed a herd of pedigreed cattle, which supplied rich milk for officers’ families and

³⁶ However, in the 1960’s, after the Parker farmland had been taken over by post buildings, the Kutz farm was referred to as “Farm No. 1,” when it was sold off to Dickinson College. (See Box 22, Folder 14, Carlisle Barracks Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA.)

³⁷ *The Carlisle Arrow*, 10 September, 1909, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

³⁸ Thomas G. Tousey, *Military History of Carlisle and Carlisle Barracks* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1939), 357-358.

enlisted men, and a herd of pigs which furnished the garrison with fresh pork. Fortunate were those who served at the Medical Field Service School during the 'early days'!³⁸

Local tradition holds that during World War II, the Farmhouse was used as a social club for segregated African-American officers and enlisted soldiers.³⁹ The 1930 U.S. Census shows eleven "negro" soldiers living in a group on the Army post.⁴⁰ It is unclear whether they lived in or near the Farmhouse, or even whether they were farmers; however, the 1920 and 1940 U.S. Censuses show no such group at Carlisle Barracks. This suggests that the eleven men were indeed the "detachment of colored soldiers" who worked on the farm full-time in the 1920s and 1930s (gone by World War II), probably socialized at the Farmhouse, and maybe even lived there.

³⁹ Thomas G. Tousey, *Military History of Carlisle and Carlisle Barracks* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1939), 364.

⁴⁰ Based on a conversation with a farmhouse caretaker who was familiar with its history. January 2011.

⁴¹ 1930 United States Census, North Middleton, Cumberland, Pennsylvania, E.D. 36, pg. 6A, <http://ancestry.com>, accessed July 2014. Names of the negro soldiers: Arthur Booker, Arthur Cannon, James R. Carter, Charlie Felix, Earnest Harper, Theodore S. Hicks, Charlie Jackson, William Jefferson, Leslie Meadows, Robert E. Smith, Henry G. Weathers.



The Farmhouse, September 1933, during the Medical Field Service School era. Courtesy of the National Archives Records Administration.

Gradually, the farms decreased in importance as the army's need for training space outweighed the demand for agricultural products. The dairy cows were "disposed of" in the early 1930's, and the big yellow barn was destroyed by fire on 16 October 1938. At the same time, the garrison was undergoing a major building program, and more of the farmland was occupied by the familiar buildings still standing on post today.⁴¹ It was about this time that the Farmhouse ceased to house farmers and became Officers Quarters for Carlisle Barracks.

⁴² Thomas G. Tousey, *Military History of Carlisle and Carlisle Barracks* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1939), 386.

A plaque which formerly stood near the house stated that it was remodeled in 1943, 1948, and 1981. However, no details are available of the changes it underwent at these times. A few interior elements remain which are likely original, such as the front door with its hardware, sidelights and stained glass transom window, the staircase and banister, several other interior and exterior doors with hardware, most of the windows, and the stacked fieldstone foundation and hand-hewn floor beams visible in the basement. Although three chimneys remain, all the fireplaces but one have been covered over.

Conclusion

In the decades since the Farmhouse became officers' quarters, its historic connection to Carlisle Indian Industrial School was forgotten and minimized to the point where it was slated for demolition to make room for modern housing. Due to our efforts to document its history at the request of the Cumberland County Historical Society, as well as the resulting outcry by descendants of the Indian School students, the Army has now agreed to preserve the house as a memorial to the students and their families. We are pleased we could make such a valuable contribution to the history of the Native American boarding school experience in the United States and Canada.

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